

# THIRD GRADE READING SUCCESS MATTERS



The Campaign for  
**GRADE-LEVEL  
READING**



## THE CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING

**74% of students who fail to read proficiently by the end of third grade falter in the later grades and often drop out before earning a high school diploma.**

The Campaign is a collaborative effort by dozens of funders and nonprofit partners across the nation to ensure that more of our low-income children succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. The Campaign focuses on the most important predictor of school success and high school graduation—grade-level reading by the end of third grade.

Education research recognizes that proficiency in reading by the end of third grade enables students to shift from just learning to read to also reading to learn, and to master the more complex subject matter they encounter in the fourth grade curriculum. Most students who fail to reach this critical milestone falter in the later grades and often drop out before earning a high school diploma. Yet two-thirds of U.S. fourth graders are not proficient readers, according to national assessment data. This disturbing statistic is made even worse by the fact that more than four out of every five low-income students miss this critical milestone.

The Campaign is based on the belief that schools must be accountable for helping all children achieve. This means schools must provide quality teachers and effective teaching for all children in every classroom every day. But schools cannot succeed alone. Ensuring the academic success of children from low-income families will require a focus beyond school. It will require engaged communities mobilized to remove barriers, expand opportunities, and assist parents in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities to serve as full partners in the success of their children.

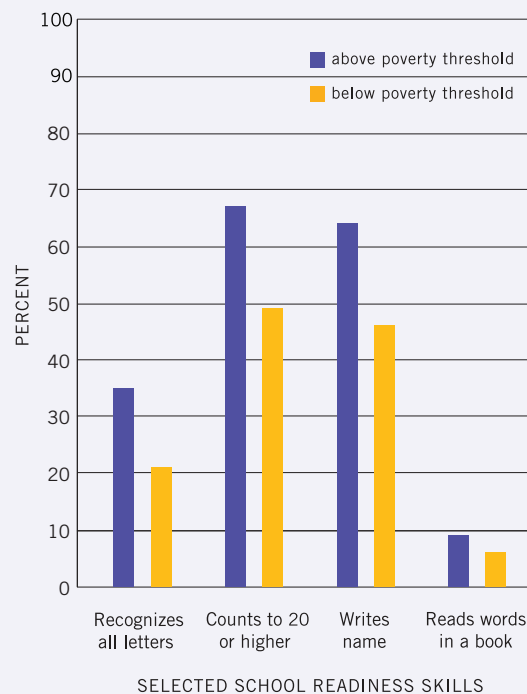
With this in mind—in addition to insisting on quality teaching and a more seamless system of care, services, and support—the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading has targeted three challenges to students' reading success that are widespread, consequential, and amenable to community solutions.

By age three, low-income children have heard **30 MILLION** fewer words than higher-income children.

## SCHOOL READINESS

**The Readiness Gap:** Too many children from low-income families begin school already far behind. The research also shows that these children are less likely to be read or spoken to regularly or to have access to books, literacy-rich environments, high-quality early care, and prekindergarten programs.

Percentage of Children Ages 3–6  
With Selected School Readiness Skills,  
by Poverty Status

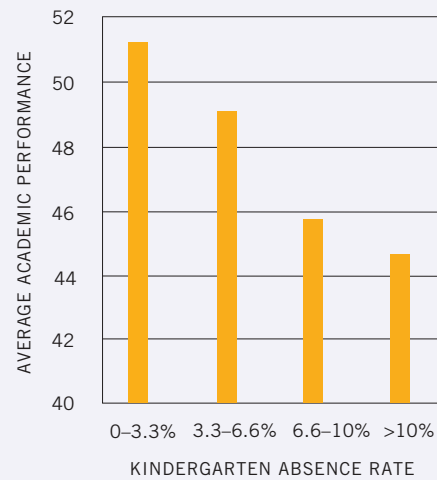


Source: O'Donnell, Kevin. Parents' Reports of the School Readiness of Young Children from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2007, Table 2. National Center for Education Statistics. August 2008. [www.childtrendsdatabank.org/?q=node/291](http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/?q=node/291)

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The Attendance Gap (Chronic Absence): Too many children from low-income families miss too many days of school. Research has found that one in 10 kindergarten and first grade students nationwide misses nearly a month of school each year in excused and unexcused absences.

Chronic Kindergarten Absence  
Lowers 5th Grade Reading  
Success for Low-Income Students

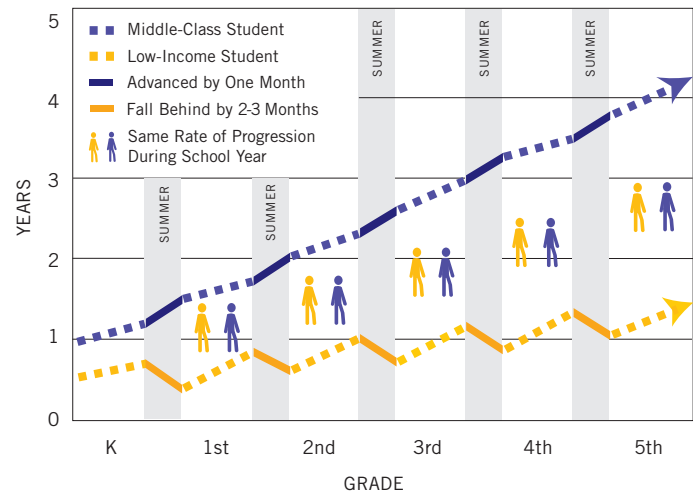


Source: ECLS-K data analyzed by National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP).

SUMMER LEARNING

The Summer Slide (Summer Learning Loss): Too many children lose ground over the summer months. Without access to the enriching activities available to more-affluent peers, research shows that children from low-income families lose as much as three months of reading comprehension skills over the summer. By the end of fifth grade, they are nearly three grade levels behind their peers.

Low-Income Students Fall 2.5 to 3 Years Behind by Fifth Grade



Source: Cooper, H., Borman, G., & Fairchild, R. (2010). "School Calendars and Academic Achievement." In J. Meece & J. Eccles (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Schools, Schooling, and Human Development* (pp. 342-355). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.



**GOAL:** By 2020 a dozen states or more will increase by at least 100% the number of low-income children reading proficiently at the end of third grade.

## CORE ASSURANCES

### ASSURANCE #1

Quality teaching of the whole child for every child in every setting every day.

### ASSURANCE #2

Locally owned community solutions for improving school readiness, attendance, and summer learning.

### ASSURANCE #3

A seamless, outcomes-accountable system of care, services, and family supports for children, from birth through third grade.





## THE THREE ARENAS

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading will operate within and at the intersections of three important arenas:

1

### Early Childhood Programs & Schools

**Campaign Win:** Broad-based support for and investment in “on track” child development, learning, and literacy across the early years and early grades.

**Core Strategy:** Help to tilt more of the public, private, and philanthropic dollars spent on early care, development, and education toward supporting interventions that work and toward efforts that are more aligned, coordinated, and sequenced to yield better outcomes and greater impact.

2

### The Civic Space Around Schools

**Campaign Win:** Widespread community engagement, civic action, and citizen service to find and implement community solutions to current barriers to student success.

**Core Strategy:** Focus the attention, energy, and imagination of civic leaders, parents, and community organizations on three important, consequential, and solvable problems—too many students not ready for school, too many students absent from school, and too many students losing ground academically over the summer months.

3

### Federal, State & Local Policy

**Campaign Win:** Local, state, and federal policy reforms to strengthen, scale, and sustain improved child outcomes and school success for children in low-income families.

**Core Strategy:** Combine effective advocacy and place-based investing to generate public support, political will, proof points, models, and momentum for systems of care, services, and supports for expectant parents and children from birth through third grade.





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